Review Gate Approval
Instructions

Version 1.4 ● 31 DEC 2012

Review Gate Approval Instructions Version History

Current Framework tools are available on the Framework Web site.

Release Date	Description
31-Dec-2012	Version 1.4 released. Revised Instructions and Template to reflect changes recommended by the Framework Change Advisory Board (CAB) and approved by DIR (change request 68).
30-May-2008	Version 1.3 released. Revised Instructions and Template to reflect changes recommended by the Framework Change Advisory Board (CAB) and approved by DIR (change request 38).
28-Sep-2007	Version 1.2 released. Revised Instructions to reflect an emergency change approved by DIR (change request 39).
1-Sep-2007	Version 1.1 released. Revised Instructions to reflect changes recommended by the Framework Change Advisory Board (CAB) and approved by DIR (change requests 34 and 37).
13-Oct-2006	Version 1.0 Instructions and five Templates released.

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Introduction

State government, as well as other public and private sector organizations, has consistently struggled to deliver technology-based projects successfully. In many cases, projects proceed to the next stage of delivery without assessment and approval of whether business outcomes have been achieved. The emphasis is less on business results that involve technology and more on the technology itself.

Business outcomes are results of the project that improve the ability of the organization to achieve its mission. Outcomes may include results such as fulfilling broad organizational goals, attaining specific operational objectives, and providing measurable operational improvements.

Within the Texas Project Delivery Framework (Framework), a review gate is a distinct division of effort for a specified purpose, such as justifying or implementing a project. Each review gate is intended to synchronize the state's investment in a project based on approval of business outcomes. Completion of a review gate and transition to the next review gate is a key milestone in a project's life cycle. The Review Gate Approval tool is included within the Framework to facilitate agency head assessment and approval of whether the business outcomes at that specific point have been achieved and whether a project is ready to proceed to the next review gate.

Each review gate contains a set of key questions that must be answered by the agency head. The agency head approves the review gate based on business outcomes supported by project evidence.

The review gate approval process considers:

- verification of approved deliverables
- assessment of key questions
- assessment of open issues

Use of the Review Gate Approval

Overview

Within the Framework, review gate approval is a key deliverable in all review gates. The Framework includes the Review Gate Approval Instructions. A Review Gate Approval Template is provided for each review gate. The Review Gate Approval Instructions provide guidance for completing all of the templates. The Review Gate Approval templates are:

- Business Justification Review Gate Approval
- Project Planning Review Gate Approval
- Solicitation and Contracting Review Gate Approval
- Project Implementation Review Gate Approval

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 • Benefits Realization Review Gate Approval

Use of the Review Gate Approval templates assumes that project evidence and business results have been analyzed and reviewed throughout the particular review gate and the project life cycle. The agency head must give careful consideration to providing review gate approval when there is a lack of evidence to support responses to key questions or the response to any of the review gate checklist questions is "no."

A review gate identifies a point at which clear decisions are made about projects, such as whether to continue the project or modify parameters of the project. Examples of project parameters are project scope and resources. In order to mitigate risks and accommodate changes to project parameters, it may be necessary to modify planned activities within a review gate, or to repeat approval of the review gate.

Applicability

The appropriate Review Gate Approval must be completed for each review gate of major information resources projects, and for certain major contracts. Refer to the Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) Contract Management Guide for guidance on which major contracts are required to use the Framework.

Governance and Scope

In conducting an assessment of business outcomes for a particular review gate, the agency head collaborates with the Executive Sponsor and Technology Sponsor to obtain complete, accurate, and comprehensive status information on the project. This status information provides evidence to support the agency head's response to key questions. Emphasis is placed on whether the expected results and deliverables of the project, thus far, align with business goals and objectives.

The Review Gate Approval should be used in conjunction with agency level governance structures and practices. For example, the agency may choose to identify other internal practices that are required in conjunction with the Review Gate Approval. These practices may include procedures for allowing steering committees or individual stakeholders to assess and report on the status of business outcomes at a specific point and provide a recommendation of whether a project is ready to proceed to the next delivery stage. In addition, governance practices may include procedures for what happens if open issues exist at the time of the assessment.

Section 1. General Information

Specify the contact and project manager information. The contact individual and project manager may be the same person.

Section 2. Review Gate Deliverables

Deliverables are the project outcomes that provide well-defined functionality and tangible products. Required deliverables for each review gate are listed on the appropriate template. Depending on the project life cycle, size, type, and/or governance structure, additional agency-level required and supplemental deliverables may be identified.

Specify the version and agency head approval date (mm/dd/yy) for each deliverable. If approval of the agency head is not required, specify "not applicable" for agency head approval date.

Note: The Solicitation and Contracting review gate deliverable, Contract Amendment and Change Order Approval, is required if contract costs increase above 10 percent or there is a significant change in the contract date. If the Contract Amendment and Change Order Approval is not required, specify "not applicable" for version and agency head approval date.

Section 3. Review Gate Checklists

A Review Gate Checklist is included in every Review Gate Approval Template. Answer questions in the checklists based on evidence that supports the responses to key questions. The sections below contain guidance for addressing key questions and checklist questions within each review gate. Refer to the section for the review gate under assessment.

When responding to checklist questions, if a response of "yes" is indicated, evidence to support the response must exist. If a response of "no" is indicated, at least one open issue related to the checklist question is required.

Business Justification Review Gate Checklist

Item 1. Key Question: What business problem does the project solve?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Does the project demonstrate that it solves the business problem? — place emphasis on whether the selected alternative for the project demonstrates that it satisfies the actual business needs and enhances the organization's ability to achieve its core mission.

In addition, consider whether the selected alternative introduces solutions to nonexistent problems by delivering unwanted or "bonus" features that have little or nothing to do with improving business processes.

Item 2. Key Question: What other alternatives have been considered?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Have other alternatives been considered? — place emphasis on the analysis used to compare various business solution alternatives. This analysis provides a basis for selection of the alternative that delivers the greatest value to the state, the agency, and constituents.

Item 3. Key Question: What is the impact of not doing this project?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Has the impact of not doing the project been determined? — place emphasis on the ability to meet agency goals and objectives, if the project is not implemented. Consider if business process improvements can still be delivered or potential negative consequences will result, if the project is not implemented.

Item 4. Key Question: What is the project's justification, in terms of expected benefits?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Is the project justified by the expected benefits? — place emphasis on the expected results of the project, in terms of fulfilling organization goals, attaining specific operational objectives, and providing specific, measurable operational improvements.

Item 5. Key Question: When will the project deliver expected benefits and business outcomes?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Is there a projection of when the project will deliver expected benefits and business outcomes? — place emphasis on whether there is an estimate of when the project will show results in terms of fulfilling organization goals, attaining specific operational objectives, and providing specific, measurable operational improvements.

Item 6. Key Question: What are the opportunities for reuse of business processes and technical components?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Were opportunities for reuse of business processes and technical components maximized? — place emphasis on whether business processes and technical components from prior projects within the agency or from other agencies, institutions of higher learning, or other governments (federal, local, other states) were considered and utilized.

Project Planning Review Gate Checklist

Item 1. Key Question: What business needs used to justify the project changed?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Have the business needs used to justify the project remained consistent? — place emphasis on whether the project demonstrates that it still satisfies the actual business needs. Specifically address business needs that changed.

In addition, consider whether the actual business needs and planned project activities are consistent with the business needs used to justify the project. Determine if planned project activities satisfy the actual business needs.

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Item 2. Key Question: What project management and technology-related activities are planned in order to solve the problem?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are both project management and technology-related activities planned? — place emphasis on whether activities and resources to actually deliver the product and/or service have been defined and sequenced appropriately.

Project management activities and deliverables include methods for managing the planned project activities over the life of the project. These activities include methods and tools for monitoring progress and controlling changes throughout the project life cycle. These methods include controlling changes such as changes to the project scope and budget, managing issues, and reporting project status.

Technology-related activities and deliverables include technology aspects of the product or service, such as requirements management and design descriptions for translation into an actual product or service.

Item 3. Key Question: What are the quantifiable outcomes that can be used to measure success?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are quantifiable outcomes measuring success defined? — place emphasis on whether measurements for project quality and product and/or service performance are adequate, appropriate, and quantifiable.

Item 4. Key Question: How was an achievable scope defined?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Is the defined scope achievable? — place emphasis on whether the product and/or service with the specified scope can be delivered within the constraints of the project. Constraints limit or restrict the project team's options regarding scope, staffing, scheduling, and management of the project.

Item 5. Key Question: How are the cost, schedule, and performance baselines complete and thorough?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are the cost, schedule, and performance baselines complete and thorough? — place emphasis on whether the cost, schedule, and performance planning information are complete, accurate, comprehensive, and baselined. This information should align with project scope, requirements, standards, and constraints.

Item 6. Key Question: What are the project risks that have been identified and ranked?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Have the project risks been identified and ranked? — place emphasis on whether the risk management planning information is complete, accurate, and comprehensive.

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Solicitation and Contracting Review Gate Checklist

Item 1. Key Question: What business needs used to justify the project changed?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Have the business needs used to justify the project remained consistent? — place emphasis on whether the project demonstrates that it still satisfies the actual business needs. Specifically address the business needs that changed.

In addition, consider whether the actual business needs and solicitation requirements are consistent with the business needs used to justify the project. Determine if solicitation requirements satisfy the actual business needs.

Item 2. Key Question: What are the performance standards?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are there effective performance standards? — place emphasis on whether performance and service standards are comprehensive, measurable, and expressed in terms of boundaries or limitations that may exist for the data that will be used for metrics.

Item 3. Key Question: What are the incentives to encourage delivery of expected outcomes?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are there incentives to encourage delivery of expected outcomes? — place emphasis on whether the vendor compensation approach is tied to achieving or exceeding performance and service standards. Consider such items as penalties, warranty provisions, and additional compensation to encourage successful delivery of business outcomes.

Item 4. Key Question: What is the procedure to evaluate vendor performance?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Is there an acceptable procedure to evaluate vendor performance? — place emphasis on whether performance planning and monitoring and control approaches are complete and comprehensive.

Item 5. Key Question: What requirements are stipulated in the solicitation document to attain accountability?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are requirements stipulated in the solicitation document to attain accountability? — place emphasis on ensuring the agency has rights to make changes, decisions, and approvals without negative consequences. Consider rights such as the right to change performance measurements as business needs change, the right to approve implementation of services prior to becoming operational, and the right to remove resources without negative impact.

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Item 6. Key Question: How are the requirements in the solicitation document measurable?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Are the requirements in the solicitation document measurable? — place emphasis on whether the procurement strategies and requirements, scope of the goods and/or services, and responsibilities for the procurement life cycle are comprehensive and measurable.

Project Implementation Review Gate Checklist

Item 1. Key Question What business needs used to justify the project changed?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Have the business needs used to justify the project remained consistent? — place emphasis on whether the project demonstrates that it still satisfies the actual business needs. Specifically address the business needs that changed.

In addition, consider whether the actual business needs and implementation of the solution are consistent with the business needs used to justify the project. Determine if the implementation solution satisfies the actual business needs.

Item 2. Key Question: How is the project aligned with business requirements?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Does the project demonstrate that it is aligned with business requirements? — place emphasis on the assessment of the business requirements and business outcomes in terms of alignment with specified requirements and expectations. Consider stakeholder acceptance feedback prior to deployment.

Item 3. Key Question: How does the project meet defined technical requirements?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Does the project demonstrate that it meets defined technical requirements? — place emphasis on the assessment of the technical requirements and the outcomes resulting from testing and/or use of the product. Technology aspects of the project, such as system requirements and design descriptions, were translated to operationalize the product and/or service.

Item 4. Key Question: What are the planned milestones/deliverables that were and were not met?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Did the project meet planned milestones and deliverables? — place emphasis on an assessment of the schedule and the outcomes resulting from project monitoring and control tasks. Consider planned effort, duration, start and end dates in comparison/contrast to actual effort, duration, start and end dates for milestones and deliverables.

Identify all outstanding milestones and deliverables. In addition, if the project is part of a phased implementation, specify all related or remaining phases associated with the project.

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Item 5. Key Question: How has the vendor met defined performance requirements?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Has the vendor met defined performance requirements? — place emphasis on measurement and assessment of the goods and/or services delivered by the vendor in terms of the performance and service standards established.

Benefits Realization Review Gate Checklist

Item 1. Key Question: What were the expected benefits and business outcomes that were not realized?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Were all expected benefits and business outcomes realized? — place emphasis on the evaluation of all project outcomes, specifically addressing the agency's ability to meet the stated organization goals, operational objectives, and expected operational improvements. Specifically address the expected benefits and outcomes that were not realized. This evaluation enables conclusions to be drawn about whether the delivered product and/or service solved the business problem.

Item 2. Key Question: What were the expected performance standards that were not satisfied?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Were all expected performance standards satisfied? — place emphasis on the product and/or service and its relationship to performance standards for overall effectiveness in areas such as quality, productivity, and response. Specifically address the expected performance standards that were not satisfied.

Item 3. Key Question: What are the lessons learned and process improvement recommendations based on this experience?

In determining the answer to the checklist question — Have lessons learned and process improvement recommendations been identified? — place emphasis on if the documented lessons learned and corresponding recommendations for improvements are expressed in terms that can be used to improve agency or state-level processes and projects. Include activities, actions, and decisions that would not be repeated for future projects of similar size and scope. Consider if the lessons learned are comprehensive in terms of scope. All aspects of project delivery, from project proposal to project evaluation following closure, should be addressed.

Section 4. Open Issues

Summarize any open issues and the plans for resolution of issues within the context of approving the review gate. At least one open issue is required for each checklist question with a response "no" in the Review Gate Checklist section.